DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 116 531 HE 006 887

TITLE The Reform of Higher Education, 1975.
INSTITUTION Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, Stockholm (Sweden).
PUB DATE [75]
NOTE 15p.; Pages 12 and 13 are marginally legible

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Admission Criteria; Continuous Learning; *Educational Change; *Educational Planning; *Equal Education; Governing Boards; *Higher Education; Program Coordination; Regional Planning; Research; State Universities; *Universal Education; Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS *Sweden

ABSTRACT

The major educational reforms enacted in Sweden during recent decades have been part of a general effort to broaden the content of democracy and to bring about a more equitable allocation of affluence, influence, and opportunities of cultural experience. The time has come for the fulfillment of the comprehensive school and upper secondary school reforms by the opening of higher education to new groups in society. Not only must admission requirements be revised, but also the content, organization, and geographical location must be planned with new objectives in mind. Priority must be given to the question as to how higher education is to be distributed between different groups, regions, and educational fields to care for the educational needs of individuals and of working life. (Author/KE)

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ED115531

SWEDISH MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

THE REFORM OF HIGHER EDUCATION 1975

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SWEDISH MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The 1975 Reform of Higher Education in Sweden

On February 28 the Government, at the proposal of the Minister of Education, Mr. Bertil Zachrisson, presented to the Riksdag a Bill (Prop. 1975:9) concerning the reform of higher education. On May 21 the Riksdag took its decision on the Bill. The reform thus set forth is based above all on proposals put forward by the 1968 Education Commission (U 68) and the Committee on Admissions to Higher Education. It covers several different aspects of higher education. In the following a brief summary is given of the aims and contents of the reform.

Purposes of the reform of higher education

The major educational reforms enacted in Sweden during recent decades have been part of a general effort to broaden the content of democracy and to bring about a more equitable allocation of affluence, influence and opportunities of cultural experience. The time has now come for the fulfilment of the comprehensive school and upper secondary school reforms by the opening up even of higher education to new groups in society. Not only must the admission requirements of higher education be revised - also its content, organization and geographical location must be planned with new objectives in mind. Priority must be given to the question as to how higher education is to be distributed between different goups, regions and education fields in order to cater for the educational needs of individuals and of working life.

The following are some of the main points of the Reform Bill presented by the Government.

1. A broadened Högskola (higher education)

At the same time as recruitment to existing forms of higher education must be broadened, higher education must be renewed so as to cater for the educational requirements of new groups of people, needs which among other things are occasioned by new exigencies of working life. The Högskola of the future must be able to cater for all types of needs in the field of higher education and must recruit its members from various kinds of vocational activity as well as from all the lines of the upper secondary school.

The realization of a broader Högskola on these lines will among other things require rules of qualification and selection whereby various kinds of qualifications, i.e. not only school qualifications, and real (as opposed to formal) aptitudes for study are taken into account. Another requirement, not least with a view to the development of new combinations of courses from different fields, will be for different kinds of education at post-secondary level to be treated together for planning and other purposes.

2. A Högskola linked with research

One of the traditional characteristics of basic studies at universities and certain other post-secondary institutions has been their relation to current research, as a result of which these studies often cover a wider range and are more problem-oriented than other forms of post-secondary education. It is important for these qualities to be extended throughout the entire field of higher education.

Interaction between basic studies and research/research training should be established throughout the whole of the Högskola. All higher education should be aimed at inculcating habits of critical thought.

3. A Högskola of democracy

The higher education is part of the public education system and as such exists for the benefit of all members of society. It follows that its affairs can never be made exclusively or even primarily the business of those who are active at universities and other institutions involved. For instance, public interests must be assured of a decisive influence on the proportions between different kinds of higher education and on the distribution of such education between different areas and places. The bodies responsible for educational planning should include representatives of working life in the sectors for which the education in question prepares its students. At the same time it is important for those who work at universities etc. to play a prominent part in the local planning and direction of education and research. All employee categories and students should be assured of the opportunity of exerting influence at different levels of local organization.

The interaction which is desirable between the Högskola on one side and society and working life generally on the other side should be realized more fully within the institutional organization for the higher education by recruiting various bodies in such a way as to strike a balance between the groups and interests concerned.

4. A decentralized Högskola

The renewal of higher education should be grounded on local development work in close proximity to the educational and research environment concerned and in close contact with working life. There should be greater co-ordination between the planning of higher education and social planning generally, e.g. at regional level.

A transfer of responsibility and powers from central to local and - for purposes of more generalized planning - regional bodies is urgently needed. Decision-making powers concerning each group of business should be located as closely to the reality concerned as requirements of co-ordination, justice and efficiency permit. The units of education and research should be given wider powers and more freedom of action.

The new Högskola

will comprise far more than the universities and other post-secondary institutions of today. Higher education should be taken to include not only education following on from upper secondary school but also education which, in the eyes of the student or the labour market, constitutes an alternative to the former, even if it is at present based solely on comprehensive (elementary) schooling. The training courses undergone by prospective nurses and infant teachers are examples of education of the latter kind. The short-cycle technical programmes proposed by the U 68 Commission is one example of a new form of higher education.

The line of demarcation between upper secondary school and higher education cannot be determined once and for all. It must be subject to constant reappraisal.

A comprehensive approach to higher education is now needed following the school reforms enacted during the past few decades. But a comprehensive approach need not preclude allowances for varying aptitudes for different kinds of education and different educational units when drawing up a scheme of organization.

Qualifications for higher studies

The rules governing admissions to higher education must be framed in such a way as to ensure that those admitted to a course of studies possess the basic knowledge, skills and experience required for the studies in question. The term general qualifications for higher studies denotes the conditions that have to be satisfied by all applicants for studies of this kind, irrespective of the course of studies involved.

A resolution of principle adopted by the 1972 Riksdag (Prop. 1972:84) contains the following definition of general qualifications for higher studies:

1. the completion of studies in at least a two-year line of upper secondary school,

2. a knowledge of Swedish corresponding to not less than two grades of the social line of upper secondary school,

3. a knowledge of the English language corresponding to at least two grades of a line of upper secondary school.

It is proposed that certain courses of education, among them various specialized upper secondary school courses, comparable to the lines of upper secondary school, should carry general qualifications on the same terms as the latter.

As part of the process whereby new groups are admitted to higher education, persons who are over 25 years of age and have been gainfully employed for at least four years should thereby acquire general qualifications for higher studies. No formal substantiation of knowledge of Swedish will then be required, but the stipulation of a command of the English

language corresponding to at least two grades of upper secondary school will normally also apply to persons obtaining general qualifications in this way, the reason being that this command of the English language is generally needed in order for a student to be able to pursue higher studies successfully.

Special qualifications over and above the general qualifications may be stipulated for various courses of study. For example, a knowledge of mathematics, physics and chemistry corresponding to three years of upper secondary school may be stipulated for admission to university studies in engineering.

The goals of higher education

The general goals of school education should also apply to higher education. This means that higher education should be designed to promote such factors and qualities as personal development, greater affluence, democracy, internationalization and social change.

A person practising a trade or profession should be expected to view his own vocational performance in a wider context, to undertake a critical appraisal of phenomena encountered in working life and to contribute towards the development and renewal of his vocational activities. At university level it is natural for particular demands to be made concerning the development of the student's ability in these respects.

All higher education must be conducted on a scientific basis and must train students in the faculty of critical thought. One of the important tasks of higher education is to provide knowledge and skill that will serve as a foundation for vocational activity within a sector - often a wide sector - of working life. Courses of education which today are narrowly specialized and one-sidedly tailored to the exigencies of the labour market should be broadened. Courses of education which today lack elements of vocational preparation should be in some way related to working life. Efforts should be made to impart a greater element of problem orientation to the content and forms of activity of higher education.

Education and research

Important tasks for the development of higher education will be to broaden recruitment for research training from various kinds of basic education and to broaden research and research training so as to relate them to the problem areas of different courses of basic higher education. The aim should be to bring about a transfer of ideas and discoveries between research/research training and various kinds of basic education, including more vocationally oriented studies, which at present have no direct links with research, and thus to enrich both education and research.

It is not practically feasible for basic education and research/research training always to be conducted at one and the same institution. On the other hand closer contacts should be facilitated between units with and units without a research

organization of their own. Special funds should be provided and other measures taken to make it possible for research projects to be based even on units of the latter kind. University lecturers and their counterparts - this includes the teachers now principally responsible for higher education outside the university towns - should be given better opportunities of participating in research and research training.

Vocational education sectors

For purposes of planning and the allocation of resources and for work on the development of the content and organization of the educational programmes, higher education should be divided into the following five vocational education sectors:

. technology,
. administration, economics and social work
. medicine and other nursing work
. teaching and
. cultural work and information.

Recurrent education

Future planning of the education system should be based on the idea of recurrent education - i.e. the alternation of periods of education and periods of employment - as a normal model for individual educational planning. Priority should be given, in the planning activities of higher education authorities and elsewhere, to measures which will help to make it practically feasible for individuals to plan for recurrent education.

The reform contains a number of measures which are designed to promote recurrent education. These include the new rules of qualification and selection, wider opportunities to study single courses, the expansion of higher education facilities outside the university towns, greater local and regional responsibility for educational planning and greater interaction between higher education and working life. Other important prerequisites of recurrent education are dealt with in the Bill concerning Financial aid to adult students (Prop. 1975:23). This Bill was also decided upon by the Riksdag in May this year. Another important task concerns the evening out of differences between different lines of upper secondary school with regard to elements of vocational preparation and preparation for studies.

The organization of higher studies

Higher studies should be organized partly as educational programmes, partly as single courses.

General educational programmes should correspond to more permanent requirements and should be established by the Government. These should be governed by centrally adopted plans. The more detailed planning of an educational programme may vary from one place to another, and in other respects too the plans should provide generous scope for local decisions

concerning the planning of courses of study and other matters.

Local educational programmes should be set up at the universities and other institutions to suit particular local conditions. These programmes should be a valuable aid in day-to-day work on the development of higher education.

Individual educational programmes should be established locally following applications by individuals. The purpose of these lines will be to cater for special wishes concerning combinations of studies.

Most of the vocationally oriented programmes at present to be found at university level should be accommodated within the new organization of studies as general educational programmes. Within the sphere of the faculties of arts and sciences, the range of general programmes must be developed and the numbers of students in the various lines must be adapted in such a way as to make the vocational direction of each programme realistic to the individual student in relation to employment prospects. Moreover, courses from the sphere of the faculties of arts and sciences should to a greater extent be included in programmes throughout the entire system of higher education.

Single courses are to provide among other things for in-service and further training needs that are not catered for by complete programmes. The provision of educational opportunities in the form of single courses throughout the higher education system is particularly important as a prerequisite of recurrent education.

Plans for local and individual educational programmes, together with all syllabi, should be established locally. A uniform system for evaluating the length of studies should be introduced in higher education to simplify combinations of courses. 40 points thus will correspond to an academic year. Even as to principles for evaluation of the results of studies a greater uniformity will be pursued. A triple scale - Fail, Pass and Credit - should be a standard for mark-setting.

An education certificate should be introduced as a documentation of completed studies. Degree titles should be retained in cases where they provide meaningful information concerning the main content of a programme and where they provide a simpler characterization of the education in question than is provided by the certificate.

Number of students, admissions

The planning of higher education should be guided both by society's demand for skilled labour and by the educational needs of the individual. The number of students that can be accommodated must ultimately be determined by the resources which society is capable of providing.

The number of students all over the field of higher education and also at the individual institution, must be planned on a more regular basis in order to guarantee a balanced development

without drastic fluctuations in the number of students and thereby to obtain an effective use of the resources totally available.

At present, admission is restricted to parts of the post-secondary education. In these cases resources are allocated for a given number of student places. For another part of the post-secondary education primarily the faculties of arts and sciences, the admission is free for all students with the required qualifications. Resources are allocated to different courses at these faculties in a direct proportion to the actual number of students. This means that the supply of courses is regulated centrally relatively strictly.

To facilitate planning and to increase the scope of action locally as regards both contents and structure of education and the distribution of means, a system implying a set frame for the resources will now be introduced also into those faculties where admission is at present unrestricted. In this case, a number of student places will be suggested centrally only to indicate a basis for a schematic calculation of resources.

Applications for admission will be received at a central office where students who are not admitted to a specific educational programme, at the institution of their primary choice will receive assistance to find out if the programme they want is available elsewhere. This form of registration is to be co-ordinated with the system of central admission to programmes within faculties that presently have a restricted intake.

Where educational programmes are concerned, a planning model should be applied featuring a lower and an upper limit between which admissions capacity is calculated for each fiscal year. The limit figures should increase by 2 per cent annually over a five-year period. Planning for the academic year 1977/1978 should for the time being be based on the assumption of an admissions capacity corresponding to about 35,000 places for full-time students in educational programmes.

The number of students attending the present day counterparts of single courses is between 10,000 and 15,000. Priority should be given to such courses in the continued expansion of higher education.

Selection

When the number of applicants for a programme or a group of programmes exceeds the number of places available, a selection will have to be made. For this purpose the applicants should be divided into groups. The preliminary procedure adopted entails four groups, viz group 1: applicants with three years' upper secondary schooling, group 2: applicants with two years upper secondary schooling, group 3: other applicants apart from those with educational qualifications from other countries, and group 4: applicants with educational qualifications from other countries. Group 1 - 3 are to be allotted places in proportion to their share of the total

number of applicants. Group 4 is to be allotted a number of places - not more than 10 per cent - in advance.

The selection made in groups 1 and 2 is to be based on a consideration of school merits and experience of working life. Given the proposed order of selection, experience of working life will probably become a frequently invoked qualification also among applicants who have attended upper secondary school. To guarantee a "direct route" from secondary school to the Högskola, admissions to a certain proportion of the places available in group 1 and 2 - roughly 20 per cent - should be determined on the strength of school merits only.

Selection in group 3 is to be based on experience of working life and, where applicable, the results of a voluntary test of aptitude for studies. There could also be a corresponding guarantee that at least a certain number of applicants with working life experience are admitted.

Location

The future expansion of higher education should mainly be based on higher education units already in existence. In places lacking permanent resources for higher education, it should be possible for single courses to be arranged, i.a. in association with adult education associations.

Basic higher education resources should in the future be located mainly to 16 places or pairs of places outside the five older university towns.

Expansion in different places must be tailored to actual conditions such as student intake. Neighbouring places must co-ordinate their expansion plans. This co-ordination should above all be effected within each of the six higher education regions centred on the six university towns, from north to south: Umeå, Uppsala, Stockholm, Linköping, Gothenburg and Lund.

Institutional organization

Sponsorship

For the time being, higher education will continue to be sponsored by state, municipal (local) or county council authorities. The state sponsored education forms the main part of the Högskola.

State institutions of higher education

The agricultural colleges should retain their special organization under the Ministry of Agriculture.

As regards the greater portion of the remainder of state higher education the division into higher education units will be decided upon by the Riksdag later on. The Bill has proposed that there should be one higher education unit in all the places involved except in the five older university towns and more than one unit at all events in Stockholm and in Gothenburg. The division into units in the older university towns should be considered by the prospective organizing committees (vid.

infra).

Each higher education unit should be directed by an executive committee, the unit board. The board is to administer all resources and to submit budget estimates for i.a. basic higher education. Its members are to include persons active within the unit as well as representatives of public interests. About 2/3 of the members will be recruited from within the unit and about 1/3 from outside it. The representatives of public interests and those teachers who are appointed as representatives of the education and research of the unit - and not as representatives of the employees - should always be in the majority. The number of employees' representatives should be roughly equal to the number of student representatives.

Planning and matters concerning the content and organization of studies in one or more educational programmes should be the responsibility of programme committees. Normally the main task of a programme committee will be to co-ordinate measures by the various institutes concerned, and accordingly the committee will have to act in close co-operation with these institutes. The committee should comprise roughly equal numbers (1/3 each) of teachers, students and representatives of working life in the field concerned, the last mentioned category including both employees and employers.

Joint institutes are an important factor of communications between basic education and research/research training. Normally an institute should be led by an institute board comprising representatives of the employees and students. None of the three groups, teachers, other employees and students, should constitute a majority in this board.

The question of the planning organization for research and research training should be considered later on. For the time being, research and research training should be planned within the existing faculties/sections. Within these faculties/sections, smaller managerial committees should be set up with different groups concerned represented. Among other things, bodies of this kind should submit budgetary requests for research and research training.

A special nominations committee should be set up within each faculty/section to deal with matters concerning the filling of professorial appointments and lectureships. This body should include six permanent members, among them one representing the students and one representing the employees. Three special members, experts in the scientific field in question, should be included in questions of professorial appointments. In a matter of this kind, the nominations committee is to submit its proposals direct to the Government.

The organization of the higher education units discussed here is illustrated in Figure 1.

Regional and central organization

A regional board should be set up for each of the six higher education regions (cf. supra). This board should be respon-

sible for co-ordination of the planning of the development and expansion of basic higher education within the region. Among other things, the board should be responsible for the distribution of funds for local and individual programmes and for single courses between units and places. It should also be invested with the collective responsibility for the links between units with and units without a permanent research organization, and among other things it should allocate special funds provided for this purpose. Finally, the regional board should be given charge of organizational questions involving two or more higher education units.

Roughly 2/3 of the members of the regional board should represent public interests, while roughly 1/3 should be recruited within the higher education.

It will be possible for the regional board to set up educational committees as advisory and initiating bodies of experts, in the qualitative and quantitative planning of the various sectors of vocational education.

A new authority, the Office of Universities and Colleges (UHÄ), should be set up primarily for planning of the higher education as a whole. The UHÄ should include five permanet planning committees for education and research. The National Board of Education should keep its supervisory functions as to the higher education attached to upper secondary school, that is the overwhelming proportion of municipal and county council higher education activites.

A survey of the propsed organization of the Högskola as a whole is given in Figure 2.

The system of allocations for higher education should be based on the division into vocational education sectors for basic higher education and into faculties/sections for research and research training. There should be greater liberty at local level concerning the use of allocated funds within a given framework.

How are the members of higher education bodies to be appointed?

Members of regional boards representing public interests should be appointed in a way that will be decided later on. Members of a regional board who are recruited within the higher education should be appointed by the Government following nominations by personnel and student organizations.

Members of unit boards representing public interests should be appointed by municipal and county council authorities.

Unit board members recruited within the higher education unit should mainly be appointed by those who are active there. The employee representatives should normally be appointed by personnel organizations. The president-chairman of the board should be appointed by the Government following nominations by the unit concerned.

Members of a programme committee who represent working life should be appointed by the unit board responsible.

Teacher representatives in a programme committee should be appointed by the teachers who are active within the field of activities covered by the committee or who are connected with the same.

Student representatives on a unit board or programme committee should be appointed directly by the students or by bodies or associations representing the students. More detailed consideration of the procedure to be applied to the appointment of student representatives should be deferred pending the proposals of the Committee on Compulsory Student Union Membership, which are due to be presented in the course of 1976.

The members of the institute board should mainly be elected by the appropriate groups at the institute.

Implementation

The main part of the reform should be put into effect as from July 1, 1977. This applies, for instance, to the new rules governing qualifications and selection, the new organization of studies, the new principles concerning quantitative planning and admissions, the new local and regional organization of higher education and the new allocations system. A Higher Education Act containing the basic regulations governing higher education should come into force at the same time.

The Office of Universities and Colleges should be established not later than October 1, 1976.

The implementation of the reform of higher education should be prepared by various authorities, including one central and six regional organizing committees.

Prop. = Government Bill

Figure 1. Outline sketch of the organization of a higher education unit

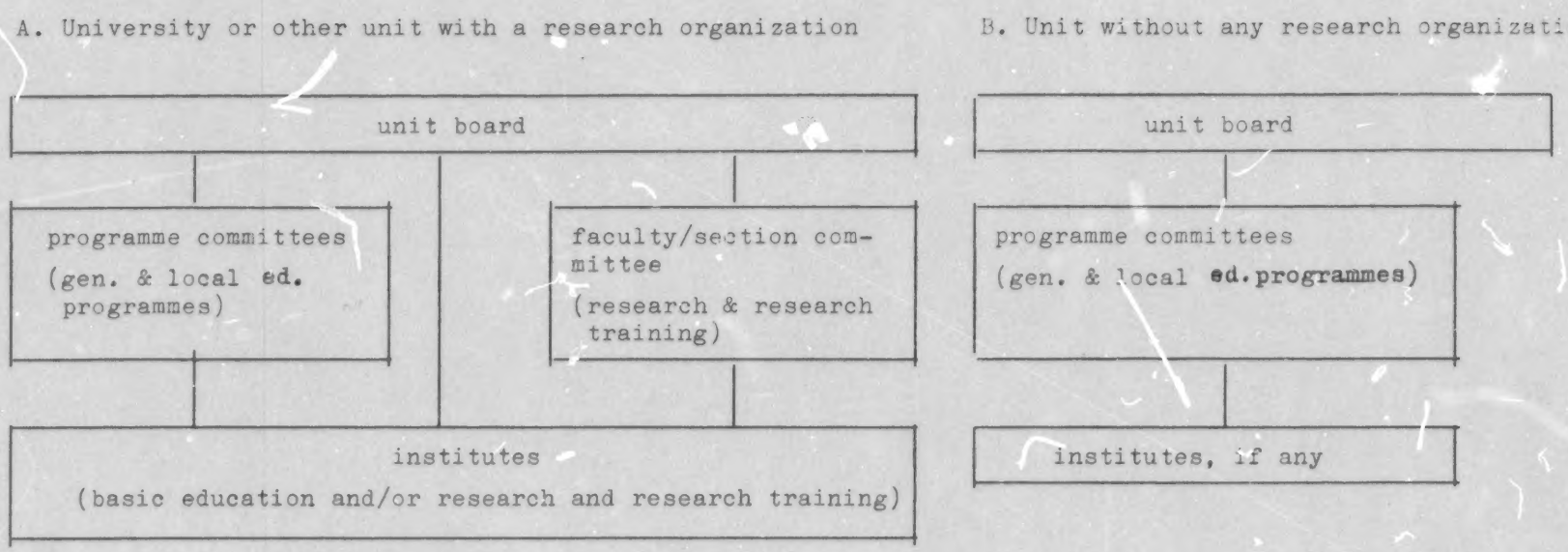
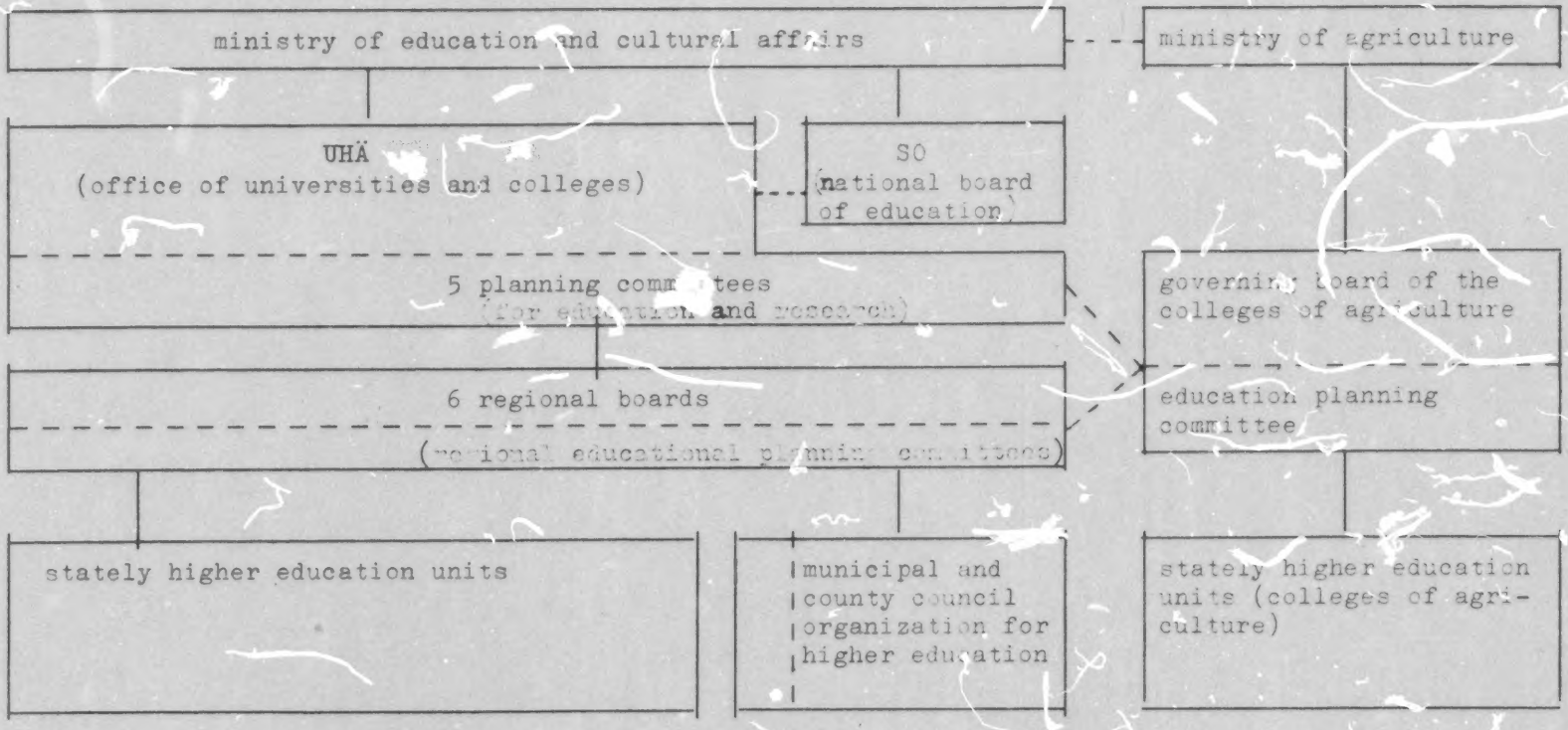


Figure 2. Survey of the proposed organization of higher education


ministry of education and cultural affairs
ministry of agriculture
UHÄ
(office of universities and colleges)
SO
(national board of education)
5 planning committees
(for education and research)
governing board of the colleges of agriculture
6 regional boards
(regional educational planning committees)
education planning committee
stately higher education units
municipal and county council organization for higher education
stately higher education units (colleges of agriculture)